



# Welcome Words

## ON SAFETY

**HELLO NEW PARENT!** We hope you will think of Welcome Baby Family Resource Center as your partner in parenting as you meet the wonder and challenges ahead. During the next 12 months, you will receive an edition of Welcome Words covering 6 special topics and including other resources you may find helpful. In addition, Welcome Baby offers other services and classes that are described in our quarterly newsletter and website: [www.welcomebaby.org](http://www.welcomebaby.org). You are also invited to call us at 919-560-7341 if you have questions or concerns. Welcome Baby is a program of Durham County and Durham County Cooperative Extension. We receive support from Durham's Partnership for Children - a Smart Start Initiative and NCHHS-Department of Community Programs.

***As a parent your safety awareness needs to change and shift as your baby develops. We grouped safety concerns by stages.***

### **Infant safety**

- Your baby's head is heavier than his ability to support it. Newborns' heads always need to be supported. Don't jiggle or shake your baby's head, even in play.
- Always leave baby with a responsible adult, never alone, even for a moment, in a car, yard or house. And never leave your baby alone with other children or a pet, even one you believe is entirely trustworthy. Even a friendly pet can react when little fist grips a tail, or fur. Young children can't read your baby's signals of distress and are not equipped to respond appropriately.
- **Car Seats! See more on car safety seats, page 2 —**
- Never leave your baby alone on any surface above the floor (even in a baby carrier). She can extend her body and flip over.
- Until the umbilical cord falls off, your baby will be limited to sponge baths. Once the cord's gone, let her sit on a bath cloth to keep from slipping in the bath. Water must be no hotter than 120 degrees. Always test water on your bare forearm before bathing her.
- Don't attach any item with a cord or necklace to or near baby (pacifier, medallion, toy, drawstring, window blind).

**By the age of 4 months**, your baby may surprise you by reaching and grabbing items he puts in his mouth and by the sudden ability to roll over. **To be on the safe side:**

- Never leave him alone where he could fall, or where he could roll into danger — against a heat source, a brick hearth, or any sharp object.
- Don't eat, drink or carry hot foods or drinks while holding him. One waved fist could result in a burn for both of you.
- Don't take your eyes off your baby in the bath, even for a second.
- Until he has good head control, avoid taking him into a pool or other water. Baby's head may accidentally bob under the water. Experts also advise against submerging an infant's face. Excessive swallowing of water can lead to water intoxication, a serious illness. Symptoms include restlessness, weakness, nausea, and convulsions, and may not show up for as long as eight hours.

**By the age of 9 months**, most babies enter a new and challenging stage of motor development and parents need to be ready. Although there are germs on the floor, your baby's probably already been exposed to them, and as long as the floor is dry, bacteria won't multiply. Wet floors, however, are another story.

- Don't let your baby eat food that's been dropped in the bathroom, in puddles, or on other damp surfaces.
- Throw away a cracker or bagel that she's gnawed on, but not finished.
- Replace or rinse any food, bottle, pacifier, or toy that's fallen on the floor or ground. Keep a water bottle in your diaper bag for these unexpected clean ups, and keep extra pacifiers or bottles just in case. Muddy puddles can be a source of harmful bacteria, so keep your baby and her toys away from them.
- While a mouthful of dirt or sand probably won't hurt your baby, even a lick of some cleaning products can. To help you remember how dangerous cleaning products are, put "poison" stickers on all potentially dangerous containers (or mark them with an X of black tape). Keep these items in a locked cabinet, even though your baby is just beginning to move around. Poisons include alcoholic beverages, chlorine bleach, furniture polish, kerosene, weed killers, lye, nail polish and remover, mothballs, over-the-counter medicines and vitamins, all prescription drugs, cosmetics, dishwashing liquids, powders and other detergents, boric acid, and drain cleaners. Never put poisonous substances in an empty food or beverage container.
- **Keep the 24-hour, toll-free number of the statewide Carolina's Poison Center, near your telephone and another copy with you at all times: (800) 222-1222 They will instruct you of what to do in an emergency.**
- Never keep gasoline, even in an approved container, in your house or attached garage. Toddlers have suffered fatal burns when gas fumes were ignited by the pilot light on a nearby gas dryer, furnace or hot water heater.

## KEEPING MEALTIMES & IN BETWEEN TIMES SAFE

When your baby is eating solid foods—and still putting everything she finds in her mouth—there's an increased risk of choking. If you haven't already done so, this is a good time to take an infant CPR and first aid class. While your baby is eating, be sure she's calm and securely seated. Laughter, crying, and general excitement can contribute to choking.

Coughing may indicate your baby is trying to clear something from her throat. Watch her carefully, but don't try to help her, which could make matters worse. Reaching into her throat could push an obstruction farther back and totally block the windpipe.

**Choking is life-threatening when the airflow is completely blocked: your child won't be able to make sounds and her face will turn from bright red to blue.** In this case, immediate first aid is needed. Ask someone to call 911 while you (or someone else trained in first aid for choking) attend to your baby. Even if your baby seems to re-cover, always call the doctor once the crisis has passed.

### Foods that should not be given to babies:

Popcorn\*Hard Candy\*Raisins,\*Nuts\*Grapes\*Whole Peas\*Raw Fruits/Vegetables\*Hot Dogs\*Chunks of Meat and Poultry.

Since she's likely to swallow without chewing, also avoid spoonfuls of peanut butter. (The American Academy of Pediatrics advises parents not to give peanuts to children until age 7 or older because of their hard, smooth shape.)

Other dangerous items include balloons or pieces of balloons, gummed pieces of paper, baby powder, safety pins, coins, and items from the trash such as eggshells and pop tops.

**For information on infant CPR and first aid, call the American Red Cross at 489-6541 or visit [www.durhamredcross.org](http://www.durhamredcross.org).**

## MAKE ANY HOME SAFE

Whether your baby scoots, creeps, or crawls, it's likely that during the coming months he'll end up in places you'd rather he couldn't reach. As physical independence grows, your baby relies on you to keep him safe and that means childproofing your home and places in which your baby will spend lots of time (grandparents, and caregivers). One of the best ways to childproof is to get down on your hands and knees to get a baby's eye view. What's down there that you haven't noticed? Be sure you find that stray pin, crayon, button, bit of paper or penny before he does.

Most common **falls** occur when a baby tries to climb out of his crib. Lower crib mattress to lowest level. Once your baby is 35 inches tall, or when the side rail is less than three-quarters of his height, it's safest to move him to a mattress on the floor. Use a sturdy gate at both the top and bottom of stairs. Remove any rickety furniture. Move the crib and other furniture away from windows, and be sure they can't be opened wide enough for baby to fall through. If windows aren't ground level, adjust them so they can't open more than 6 inches. Keep window blind cords tied out of reach. Be sure bookcases are fastened to the wall. Keep dresser drawers closed. Remove or secure loose knobs smaller than baby's fist, which could cause choking. Block stairs and steps with a gate at the top and another three steps up from the bottom. Cover glass-topped tables with a heavy table pad or remove glass. Remove tablecloths that your baby might use to pull up on.

**Drowning:** Keep the bathroom closed and the toilet lid down. Never leave your baby alone for even a second in the bathtub, in the bathroom, near a bucket of water, or near any other source of water such as a wading pool.

### **Babies can drown in only one inch of water.**

**Burns:** Block access to the stove, radiators, heaters, fireplaces, irons, curling irons, ashtrays, lighters and candles. Use covers on electrical outlets, tape down electrical cords and block access with heavy furniture. Keep hot dishes and containers away from the edge of tables and counters.

**Remember that no matter how carefully you childproof your home, there's no substitute for a watchful adult.**

## BABY ON BOARD

Motor Vehicle Crashes are the greatest threat to your baby's safety and car seats are the most vital tool to keeping your child safe in the car. When can I put my child forward facing? When can I change to a booster seat? Where is the safest place in my car to put the car seat? Your first resource to answering these questions is the booklet that came with your car seat. This booklet will have all the information pertinent to your particular seat including how to care for that seat and more importantly the upper weight limit of that seat.

### **Here are some general tips that should be helpful:**

- The best practice for infants is to keep the seat "rear facing" as long as possible. Parents state they want to turn their child's seat around at one year. While the law in NC states one year AND 20lbs pounds are the minimum requirements to do that, the American Academy of Pediatrics now recommends that until age two your child remain "rear facing" or until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their car safety seat's manufacturer.
- The safest place for an infant car seat is in center of the back seat, rear facing, if your car has a center seat.
- When they have outgrown their harness-style seat (check the instructions for the forward-facing height and weight limits), they should ride in a booster seat until the seat belt fits properly. This means that the shoulder belt lies across the middle of the chest and shoulder, the lap belt is low and snug across the thighs, and the child is tall enough to sit against the vehicle seat back with her knees bent without slouching and can stay comfortably throughout a trip—usually when the child reaches about 4'9" and between 8 to 12 years of age.

**If you still have any questions—call Welcome Baby and we will be glad to assist you! Another great resource is the UNC Highway Safety Research Center: <http://www.hsrc.unc.edu/index.cfm>.**